



## Suriname 2012 Crime and Safety Report

Drug Trafficking; Murder; Burglary; Carjacking; Theft; Stolen items; Hotels; Transportation Security; Narcoterrorism; Oil & Energy; Floods; Travel Health and Safety

Western Hemisphere > Suriname > Paramaribo

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### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

#### Crime Threats

According to the 2011 crime statistics released by the national police, Suriname experienced an approximate six percent reduction in overall crime in 2011, by comparison to 2010. By measure of the same data, seizures of illegal firearms increased 40 percent. There was also a significant rise in drug arrests, resulting in nearly a 250 percent rise in drug seizures, primarily marijuana and cocaine.

Violent crimes such as murder, residential and business robbery, carjacking, burglary, and street mugging occurred regularly in 2011. Criminals often carry firearms and other weapons and do not hesitate to use them, especially if victims resist. Although the possession of handguns is illegal, many criminals possess them. Shotguns are the only form of firearm that is permitted to be owned by civilians. As such, many criminals make use of shotguns in committing crimes.

Street crimes including thefts of backpacks and purses, jewelry (especially necklaces), and cell phones are also regular occurrences. These incidents often occur in areas frequented by foreigners. There is a steep increase in these types of crimes around the holidays.

Guests at major hotels have reported thefts of personal items including cell phones, bags, and other items in common areas of the hotels including restaurants, bars, gyms and pools.

Among the home burglaries occurring in 2011, several expatriates have become victims, including some other foreign diplomats, seeming to indicate the brazen determination of the burglars breaking into these residences. There are also reports of guard dogs being poisoned as a tactic to commit the burglary. However, there were no reports of burglary at homes where Americans reside or homes that deploy residential security guards.



## Road Safety

Vehicle accidents are a very real safety threat. In general, roads and driving conditions are poor. Police only sporadically enforce local traffic laws, and, as a result, local drivers drive recklessly. Stop signs and traffic signals are often treated as suggestions only. In 2010 and 2011, several traffic cameras were installed along Suriname's roadways in an attempt to thwart speeding traffic and cut down on resultant traffic accidents. It remains unclear, however, whether the cameras are yet operational.

Drivers should be very cognizant of mopeds, scooters, and motorcycles especially when making turns. They are very common and always have the right of way.

If involved in an accident, one is expected to leave the vehicle exactly where the accident occurred and stay at the scene until the police arrive to take a report. If one leaves before the police arrive, one will be found at fault and could be charged with leaving the scene of an accident. This wait can often stretch into hours, and it is not uncommon for roads to be completely blocked by a minor accident while waiting for the police to arrive.

Driving while talking on a cell phone is illegal and is one of the few traffic offenses that is regularly enforced.

## Political Violence

### Historical Perspective

Although Suriname has ongoing border disputes with its neighbors, Guyana and French Guiana, Suriname is not engaged in any armed hostilities.

The U.S. government does not anticipate violence resulting from existing territorial or political controversies in the near future.

On November 30, 2007, former President and military strongman Desi Bouterse and 24 co-defendants went on trial for the December 8, 1982 murders of 15 members of the political opposition. The trial convened at the special court facility at the naval base in Boxel, approximately 15 miles south of Paramaribo. While the trial is still ongoing, initial concerns that the trial might result in political violence have, so far, been unfounded. Suriname's May 25, 2010 elections, widely regarded as free and fair, resulted in a victory for the coalition led



by convicted drug-trafficker and former coup leader Desi Bouterse. Bouterse was sworn in as president in August 2010. Bouterse has continued as president of Suriname during 2011.

#### Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

The U.S. government is not aware of any regional or indigenous terrorist groups operating in Suriname.

#### International Terrorism or Transnational Terrorism

Members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have been arrested in Suriname and deported to Colombia. All indications are that these individuals have been in Suriname on narcotics trafficking-related missions. There are no indications that any other international or transnational terrorist group is operating in Suriname.

#### Civil Unrest

There have been several incidents of violence and crime directed toward illegal immigrants and especially toward illegal Brazilian gold miners in the past few years. The most serious of these incidents occurred in and around Albina on the eastern border with French Guiana on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2009. This situation involved the killing of a Brazilian miner in Albina. It escalated to the point that police and military forces began to take defensive positions. Since this incident, no other serious escalations of this sort were noted in Suriname.

While there have been no further acts of violence of this level, there have been several provocations of the police and military by members of the Maroon community. Police and military have stated that they will maintain an increased presence throughout Suriname for the foreseeable future.

### **Post-Specific Concerns**

#### Environmental Hazards

Flooding regularly occurs in Paramaribo during the "big" rainy seasons (typically May to August). During this period, many roads are often under water, and driving is extremely difficult and dangerous. Paramaribo is a city of many canals and during the worst of the flooding, it is often impossible to see where roads end and canals begin. Due to poor drainage, this flooding can last for several days.



In May 2006, Suriname experienced severe flooding in the interior of the country. The crisis stretched the government's resources beyond capacity, and in the ensuing state of emergency, the government relied heavily on foreign and international assistance. The government would likely approach the UNDP, and the U.S., French, and Dutch embassies for guidance and assistance should any major emergencies take place in Paramaribo.

#### Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Traveling by public transportation, especially outside of the city can be very dangerous. The three highways leading out of Paramaribo are often the sites of horrendous accidents usually due to speeding and often involving buses or vans transporting passengers.

#### Kidnappings

Kidnapping is a relatively rare occurrence. Of the kidnappings that do occur, many are related to either personal or business conflicts.

To date, there have been no kidnappings involving foreign victims.

#### Drugs and Narco-terrorism

Suriname is a transit zone for South American cocaine en route to Europe, Africa and, to a lesser extent, the United States. Inadequate resources, limited law enforcement training, the absence of a law enforcement presence in the interior of the country, and lack of aircraft or sufficient numbers of patrol boats limit the capacity of the government of Suriname to adequately control its borders.

There have been sporadic instances of narcotics-related violence between individuals associated with competing drug trafficking organizations. These have included assassinations, drive-by shootings, and throwing hand grenades over residential walls.

#### **Police Response**

Despite the government's stated anti-crime policy, local police generally have resource and manpower limitations that inhibit their ability to deter or respond to criminal activity. The police response to alarms or emergency calls is often slow (15 minutes or longer). It is not unusual for the victim of a crime to transport the police from the police station back to the crime scene.



According to the police, in light of the escalation of violent crime during the latter part 2010 and into 2011, police patrols have continued to increase in number, including areas where expatriates traditionally live.

#### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Incidents of police detention or harassment should be reported to the U.S. Embassy Duty Officer as soon as possible. If arrested or detained one should ensure that the police understand that one is a U.S. citizen and also politely ask the police to contact the U.S Embassy Duty Officer.

#### Where to turn to for Assistance if you Become a Victim of Crime, and Local Police Telephone Numbers

"115" is a general emergency number for police, fire, or medical emergency. Those answering this line may or may not speak English.

Police response, especially during the night, is a rarity for all but the most serious crimes.

Crimes can be reported in person or over the phone during business hours to any of the below police stations:

#### Paramaribo

Keizerstraat Station (Central Paramaribo)  
Keizerstraat 23 (011) 597 471-111 / 477-777

Nieuwe Haven Station (Paramaribo South)  
Havenlaan  
(011) 597 403-101 / 403-508 / 402-656 / 404-022 / 401-025 / 404-943

Geyersvlijt Station (Paramaribo North)  
Basitostraat  
(011) 597 451-677 / 453-570 / 451-222 / 453-748

Latour Station  
Indira Ghandiweg / Tamanoeastraat  
(011) 597 481-524 / 483-547

#### Livorno Station



Sir Winston Churchillweg  
(011) 597 481-941 / 483-400

Uitvlugt Station  
Kasabaholoweg  
(011) 597 498-573 / 435-392

Outside Paramaribo

Lelydorp Station  
(011) 597 366-785 / 366-116

Zanderij Station  
(011) 597 325-222

Brokopondo Station  
(011) 597 880-4611

Coronie Station  
(011) 597 235-122 / 235-123

Nickerie Station  
(011) 597 231-530 / 231-222

Moengo Station  
(011) 597 341-321 / via Suralco 341-280

Albina Station  
(011) 597 342-080 / 342-077

Victims of crimes can also contact the "Bureau Slachtofferzorg" (Victim's Assistance Office), Ministry of Justice and Police, Keizerstraat 155, Phone/Fax # (597) 424-016, opening hours: Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

### **Medical Emergencies**

Travelers should be aware that medical standards are far below what one would expect in the United States. "115" is a general emergency number for police, fire, or medical emergency.



Those answering this line may or may not speak English.

Traditional ambulance services are unreliable, difficult to contact, and often require upfront cash payments before transporting patients. They cannot be relied on in case of emergency. For life threatening emergencies, private vehicles or taxis are the best option for transportation to the hospital.

#### Contact Information for Local Hospitals and Clinics

##### Academic Hospital

Dr. Sophie Redmondstraat / Samsonstraat

(011) 597 442-222

The Academic Hospital is most commonly used for responding to medical emergencies and trauma such as traffic accidents. The hospital is located less than one mile from the U.S. Embassy at the intersection of Dr. Sophie Redmondstraat and Prof. Kernkampweg and has adequately trained staff and equipment to stabilize those in need of attention, before medical evacuation can be arranged.

##### Diakonessenhuis Hospital

Zinniastraat, Flora

(011) 597 427-288

##### St. Vincentius Hospital

Koninginne 4, Centrum

(011) 597 471-212

#### Air Ambulance Services

##### Hi Jet Helicopter

Zorg En Hoop Airport

Doekhieweg Oost 1

Business Hours (011) 597 531-933, (011) 597 432-577, Fax: (011) 597 432-556

Emergency (011) 597 881-1230, (011) 597 718-0008

Hi Jet Helicopters operates an air ambulance service from the Zorg En Hoop airport in Paramaribo. Hi Jet can retrieve patients from anywhere in the country that a helicopter can land and transport them to one of the hospitals in Paramaribo. Companies wishing to use this service should have a guarantee letter on file with the company or expect to pay in cash before a patient is transported.



## **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

Most foreigners are very visible in public and should take precautions to prevent becoming a victim. Visitors should avoid wearing expensive jewelry, displaying large sums of cash in public, or otherwise appearing ostentatious. Visitors are advised to make every attempt to change currency at hotels, local banks, or official cambios. Visitors are strongly discouraged from exchanging currency on the street, as this is both dangerous and illegal.

There have been reports of criminal incidents in the vicinities of the major hotels. Walking alone outside at night, even in the immediate vicinity of these hotels, is highly discouraged. If you do walk around the city, carry only what is necessary for your outing. It is not recommended to carry passports or other valuable documents, large quantities of cash, or anything else that you cannot afford to lose.

The use of public transportation, such as mini buses, by visitors unfamiliar with the country is highly discouraged. The use of reputable taxis, however, is generally acceptable.

Services offered through the major hotels and tourist agencies are usually safer, more reliable, and inexpensive. Travelers wishing to visit the interior are advised to make use of well-established tour companies for safer experiences. There have been reports of tourists and foreigners being robbed while traveling in the countryside and occasional reports of bandits on rural roads.

While driving in any vehicle, make sure your doors are locked and windows are rolled up at all times.

If confronted by an armed criminal, do not argue or attempt to confront him/her in any way. Quickly relinquish what you are asked to surrender.

For those residing or having businesses in Suriname, the presence of a professional 24-hour guard service serves as one of the best deterrents to criminals. Other security upgrades including alarms, grills, lighting, and perimeter barriers are also highly recommended. The Regional Security Office recommends that a monitored security system and residential guards be part of the residential security program for Americans residing in Suriname.

Areas to be Avoided



While some areas of Paramaribo are safer than others, there are no areas that can be considered completely safe. Criminals move without restriction into and out of neighborhoods where expatriates live, often utilizing scooters or motorcycles to evade police. It is recommended that visitors avoid walking in the Paramaribo Central area and the Palmentuin (Palm Garden) area after dark, as these areas are often used by criminals targeting foreigners.

### **Further Information**

#### Embassy Contact Numbers

U.S. Embassy Operator  
(0700-1630 M-F) (011) 597 472-900

American Citizen Services (emergencies only)  
(0700-1630 M-F) (011) 597 472-900 x2236

U.S. Embassy Duty Officer  
(Afterhours) (011) 597 710-1112

Regional Security Office  
(011) 597 472-900 x2066

Pol/Econ Section  
(011) 597 472-900 x 2205, 2208, 2209.

### **OSAC Country Council**

RSO Paramaribo – 011 597 472 900 ext 2262/2066/2065 – [DS\\_RSOPARA@state.gov](mailto:DS_RSOPARA@state.gov)

There are plans to create an Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Country Council in Suriname, with a target date of May 2012, to expand the contact the Embassy currently maintains with the American business community through its Economic Office, its Business and Educational Resource Center (BERC), the Surinamese Chapter of the American Chamber of Commerce, and the Rotary Club of Suriname.

In the meantime, the Regional Security Office is available to provide security information and briefings to any American company.